

The Boys with the Bags

Most will carry anything, endure any hardship, if beating the bushes for George gets them their own White House Office

BY WALTER SHAPIRO

Every leap year they come out in droves, leaving behind failed restaurants, backwater law firms, unemployment lines, Capitol Hill offices and dull think tanks to become high-rollers at the roulette wheel of presidential politics. They carry the bags for the candidate, check the sound system at rallies, listen to the woes of obscure county chairmen and grind out dull position papers. They endure 5:30 wake-up calls, 14-hour days, junk food, the incessant drone of the candidate's voice and the endless smiles and handshakes because they are fueled by the dreams of the office in the White House, the Georgetown dinner parties, the trips on Air Force One and being in the room when historic decisions are made.

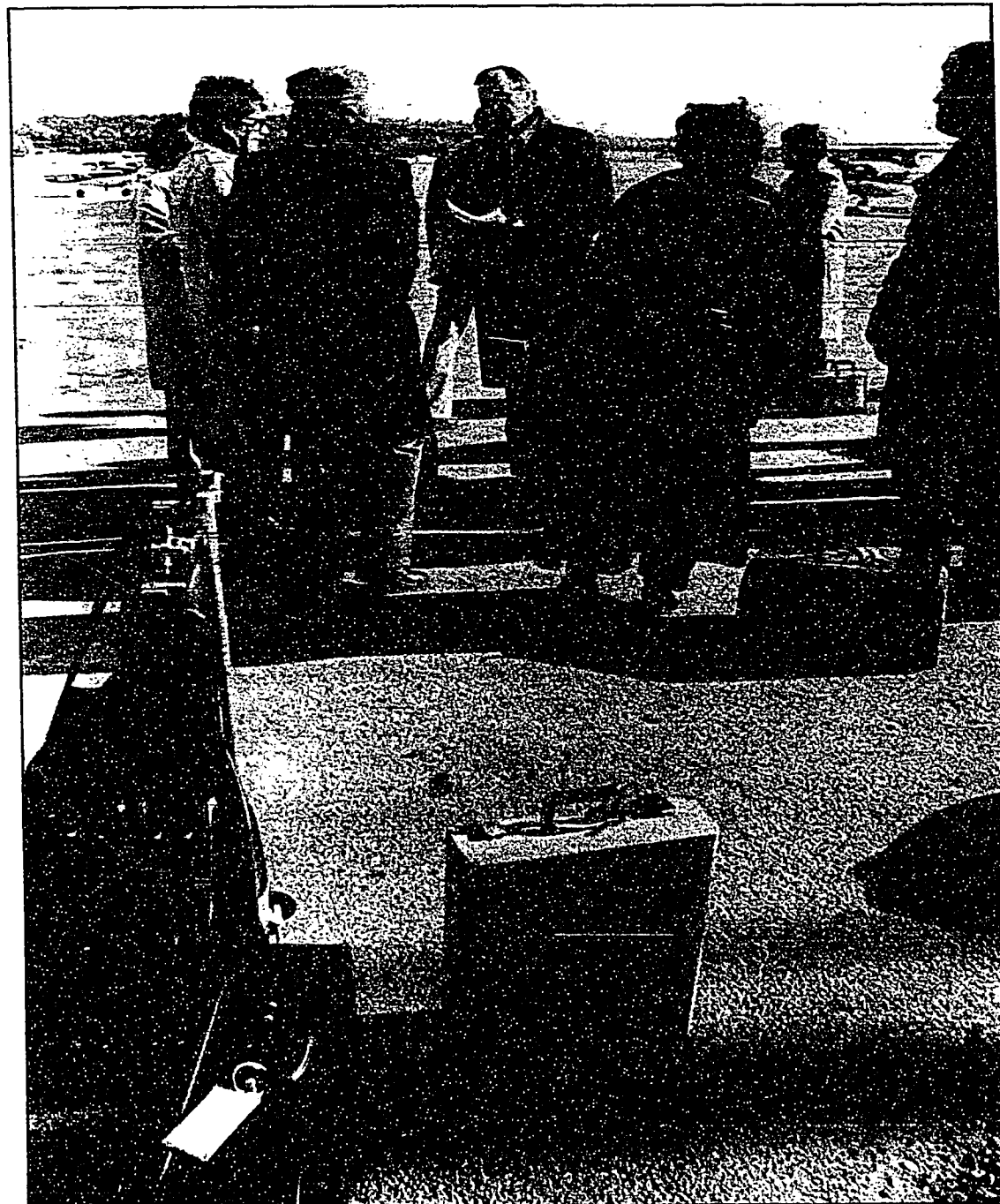
As a mecca for high-stakes gamblers, a presidential campaign eclipses the Super Bowl and the Kentucky Derby combined. If their candidate wins, they become the Hamilton Jordans and Jody Powells of a new administration. If he loses, they become the stuff of trivia quizzes for political junkies. Quick, name the 1976 Wisconsin coordinator for Mo Udall.

Their calling was best described by political prankster Dick Tuck, who during Robert Kennedy's 1968 campaign had the privilege of walking the candidate's dog, Freckles. Mocked by those who did not understand the importance of these weighty responsibilities, Tuck said, "To you it may be just a dog, but to me it's an ambassadorship."

Were candidates to advertise in the help-wanted sections for campaign staffs, here's what some of the classified ads would look like:

✓ Gentleman's gentleman. Good breeding, a self-effacing manner and a yen to travel are all part of this opportunity-laden position. Serve as a

Walter Shapiro is a contributing editor of The Washington Post Magazine.



Thirty minutes after Ronald Reagan and a cast of dozens arrived in a sleek jet at the Manchester, N.H., airport, George Bush and three aides got off his rented twin-engine prop plane.

traveling companion to prominent American political figure. A pleasant telephone voice is a necessity.

✓ Public relations trainees. Looking for frustrated reporters tired of the city room to help shape images for

a national advertising blitz. Ability to travel and work on a one-to-one basis with reporters a necessity. Should be familiar with tape recorders and the needs of television news. No heavy lifting, but lots of heavy drinking.

✓ Telephone salesmen willing to relocate. Political experience a must. Need to quickly organize an entire territory to meet inflexible deadlines. Must know how to set up franchise operation and motivate total strangers to believe in the product. Dale Carnegie experience helpful but not required.

✓ Cosmic thinkers. Looking for go-getter to turn abstract concepts into easily digestible two-minute answers for a slow, but determined, learner. Need familiarity with world and economic affairs. Brite writing required, especially ability to say nothing well. Opportunity knocks, this is how Henry Kissinger started.

In 1979, Republican George Bush was one of the candidates who had to fill jobs like these. Unlike Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan and Ted Kennedy, who could call upon the veterans of past campaigns, Bush had to staff his operation from scratch. He scored some coups like snaring Jim Baker, President Ford's 1976 campaign manager. But below the few top jobs he had to assemble a campaign staff out of tinfoil and chewing gum.

They came to Bush, despite his minuscule standing in the polls, because he was the one candidate willing to let them play at the crap tables of presidential politics. Some, like his 28-year-old traveling companion David Bates, were old family friends to whom Bush played Peter Pan and said, "Come fly away with me." Others, like press aide Bill Kenyon, were unemployed and looking for a job, any job, in Washington. Then there were the migrant laborers of politics like Iowa coordinator Rich Bond, who had spent his young life successively working for Republican candidates, digging clams on Long Island and sailing around the world. There was the startling case of deputy press secretary Susan Morrison, who was so bored with her job at the Democratic National Committee that she was willing to jump ship and work for George Bush.

Many like Bond, Morrison and

Photographs by Bill Sneed